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ENSEÑANZA DE CONTENIDOS LÉXICOS
DEL CURRÍCULO DE LENGUA INGLESA DE
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CURRÍCULO DE LENGUA INGLESA DE PRIMARIA***

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Preámbulo

El Real Decreto 1393/2007, de 29 de octubre, modificado por el Real Decreto 861/2010, establece en el Capítulo III, dedicado a las enseñanzas oficiales de Grado, que “estas enseñanzas concluirán con la elaboración y defensa de un Trabajo Fin de Grado [...] El Trabajo Fin de Grado tendrá entre 6 y 30 créditos, deberá realizarse en la fase final del plan de estudios y estar orientado a la evaluación de competencias asociadas al título”.

El Grado en Maestro en Educación Primaria por la Universidad Pública de Navarra tiene una extensión de 12 ECTS, según la memoria del título verificada por la ANECA. El título está regido por la *Orden ECI/3857/2007, de 27 de diciembre, por la que se establecen los requisitos para la verificación de los títulos universitarios oficiales que habiliten para el ejercicio de la profesión de Maestro en Educación Primaria*; con la aplicación, con carácter subsidiario, del reglamento de Trabajos Fin de Grado, aprobado por el Consejo de Gobierno de la Universidad el 12 de marzo de 2013.

Todos los planes de estudios de Maestro en Educación Primaria se estructuran, según la Orden ECI/3857/2007, en tres grandes módulos: uno, *de formación básica*, donde se desarrollan los contenidos socio-psico-pedagógicos; otro, *didáctico y disciplinar*, que recoge los contenidos de las disciplinas y su didáctica; y, por último, *Practicum*, donde se describen las competencias que tendrán que adquirir los estudiantes del Grado en las prácticas escolares. En este último módulo, se enmarca el Trabajo Fin de Grado, que debe reflejar la formación adquirida a lo largo de todas las enseñanzas. Finalmente, dado que la Orden ECI/3857/2007 no concreta la distribución de los 240 ECTS necesarios para la obtención del Grado, las universidades tienen la facultad de determinar un número de créditos, estableciendo, en general, asignaturas de carácter optativo.

Así, en cumplimiento de la Orden ECI/3857/2007, es requisito necesario que en el Trabajo Fin de Grado el estudiante demuestre competencias relativas a los módulos de formación básica, didáctico-disciplinar y practicum, exigidas para todos los títulos universitarios oficiales que habiliten para el ejercicio de la profesión de Maestro en Educación Primaria.

En este trabajo, el módulo *de formación básica* se desarrolla a lo largo de todo este trabajo puesto que el mismo tiene como objetivo la consecución de las competencias básicas planteadas por la ANECA. Así, este documento está apoyado en bibliografía de nivel avanzado y específico del tema de estudio que nos concierne y busca relacionarlos con el campo de estudio ligado al trabajo, la Educación Primaria. De esta manera, el presente trabajo de fin de grado es una investigación que puede ser orientada a su divulgación tanto a nivel específico como a público no especializado. Esto puede verse en todo el desarrollo del trabajo, ya que, aún utilizando términos concretos y pertenecientes al tema de estudio, este documento está al alcance de todo aquel que sienta interés por la enseñanza del vocabulario en la etapa educativa que nos concierne. No obstante, a partir de la subsección 1.2.1. *The learning process and the language learning* y hasta la subsección 1.2.3. *The elements of vocabulary, a little study about words (completa)* este módulo de formación básica puede ser apreciado puesto que se han tenido en cuenta los contenidos del grado que tenían que ver con el desarrollo cognitivo y emocional, las teorías del aprendizaje y de desarrollo humano y contenidos de la lengua trabajados a lo largo de las asignaturas de inglés comunes para todos los grados de la Facultad de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales.

El módulo *didáctico y disciplinar* queda recogido en aquellos apartados que buscan favorecer un entorno y un proceso de aprendizaje significativo y constructivo. Las asignaturas centradas en la didáctica nos han permitido seleccionar aquellos contenidos adecuados para la elaboración de este trabajo, siendo estos aplicados a la enseñanza del vocabulario. Decir que, además, la didáctica del Inglés ha sido uno de los elementos claves a la hora de elaborar este trabajo de fin de grado. Este módulo didáctico y disciplinar puede observarse especialmente en los apartados centrados, no sólo en la propuesta didáctica, sino en la valoración de la misma y en la explicación teórica del proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje del vocabulario y los métodos, estrategias y actividades que se manejan para ello.

Asimismo, el módulo *practicum* ha permitido que la propuesta didáctica se focalizara en una edad concreta, en un curso del Educación Primaria determinado ya que, las numerosas experiencias en las escuelas nos han permitido comprender las características propias de cada curso y sus implicaciones didácticas. Así, habiendo

realizado las últimas prácticas del grado en 6º curso de la etapa de Primaria, el trabajo propuesto para llevar a cabo al aula ha sido enfocado a esta edad, planteando materiales y actividades que contemplen las habilidades, conocimientos y capacidades supuestas para los alumnos y alumnas de esta edad.

Por último, el módulo *optativo* nos ha capacitado (tanto metodológicamente, CLIL, Nuevas Tecnologías aplicadas a la Enseñanza del Inglés, como lingüísticamente: Pronunciación y C1 de Inglés) para enfocar y comprender la magnitud de este trabajo, siendo la mención de lengua inglesa la elegida en este caso. Así, a lo largo de todo este documento puede observarse la directa relación de éste con el módulo optativo propuesto en el séptimo semestre del grado.

Por otro lado, la Orden ECI/3857/2007 establece que al finalizar el Grado, los estudiantes deben haber adquirido el nivel C1 en lengua castellana. Por ello, para demostrar esta competencia lingüística, se redactan también en esta lengua los apartados “INTRODUCCIÓN”, “RESULTADOS Y DISCUSIÓN” y “CONCLUSIONES”, así como el preceptivo resumen que aparece en el siguiente apartado.

Resumen

Este trabajo explora la importancia del léxico dentro de la enseñanza de las segundas lenguas. La enseñanza del vocabulario es un proceso de construcción de significado y de comprensión del contexto que rodea a la persona. Por ello, conocer los diferentes aspectos ligados a la palabra y sus implicaciones a la hora del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje constituye en pilar fundamental de la investigación. El presente documento examina el currículo de la etapa, una breve explicación de las teorías constructivistas, un análisis exhaustivo del conocimiento de la palabra y el proceso de aprendizaje del léxico. Asimismo, para comprender las metodologías que se desarrollan en las aulas de primaria, se han realizado unas breves encuestas que reflejan la realidad actual y se ha analizado la enseñanza de léxico de los libros de texto de Inglés. Además, se proponen nuevos métodos, estrategias y actividades que rompan con la memorización y las listas de traducción de palabras.

Palabras clave: dominio de la palabra; contextos comunicativos; aprendizaje explícito del vocabulario; conocimiento receptivo; conocimiento productivo.

Abstract

This project explores the importance of vocabulary in second language teaching. The teaching of vocabulary is a process of meaning construction and of understanding of the surrounding context. Likewise, knowing the different aspects linked to the word, as well as their implications during the teaching-learning process becomes one of the fundamental pillars of this research. The present document examines the stage curriculum, a short explanation about constructivist theories, an exhaustive analysis of word-knowledge and the vocabulary learning process. Furthermore, in an attempt to understand those methodologies developed in the Primary classrooms, some surveys which reflect the current reality have been made and some English textbooks have been analyzed. Moreover, this project suggests new methods, strategies and activities which break with the traditional memorization and bilingual lists of words.

Keywords: word-knowledge; communicative contexts; explicit learning of vocabulary; receptive knowledge; productive knowledge

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INTRODUCCIÓN

El presente proyecto de fin de grado es un trabajo de investigación centrado en términos generales en la Educación, y, específicamente, en la enseñanza y adquisición del léxico de la lengua inglesa en los centros de Educación Primaria.

Así, este tema de investigación es considerado relevante por la implicación que tiene actualmente la enseñanza del lenguaje en los centros escolares (como podrá observarse en puntos posteriores del documento).

El lenguaje, tanto la lengua materna como aquellas lenguas aprendidas a lo largo del proceso vital de cualquier persona, es un sistema vivo y en continuo cambio, compuesto por diversos elementos que le dan forma y articulan. Gracias al lenguaje, las personas pueden comunicarse, expresar sus ideas y pensamientos, nombrar elementos del entorno, comprender las posturas de quienes les rodean y establecer relaciones que les hacen estar incluidos dentro de diferentes contextos sociales. Es a través del lenguaje que las personas se relacionan e interactúan para lograr muy diversos propósitos. Desde el enfoque comunicativo se establece que el concepto de lenguaje va mucho más allá de la mera construcción de oraciones correctas puesto que la lengua está compuesta por elementos que abarcan mucho más que la gramática; estos nuevos enfoques enfatizan el peso del vocabulario dentro del aprendizaje de las lenguas. (McLaren, 2004, p.284). Además, otros autores como Skehan (1998, p.29) aseguran que “language is much more lexical than is usually accepted, particularly when real-time processing is involved¹”.

De esta manera, adentrándonos un poco más en el sentido de esta investigación, se observa que la definición dada por la RAE sobre el término “léxico” es la siguiente: “vocabulario, conjunto de las palabras de un idioma, o de las que pertenecen al uso de una región, a una actividad determinada, a un campo semántico dado, etc.”, por lo que, se puede decir que, entre otros elementos intrínsecos de la lengua o el lenguaje, el léxico es uno de los que la constituyen en gran parte. Aunque bien es cierto que sin

¹ Traducción (Skehan, 1998: 29): “El lenguaje es mucho más léxico de lo que habitualmente se acepta; en especial cuando se requieren procesamientos en tiempo real”.

otros elementos como la pragmática o la gramática una lengua no podría articularse, sin el léxico el lenguaje, directamente, no existiría. El léxico es todo el conjunto de palabras presentes en un idioma; son los términos del vocabulario lo que dan color y vida al lenguaje y lo que, en definitiva, permiten a las personas comunicarse a través del intercambio de textos, ya sean orales o escritos. Así, varios autores especifican la importancia del vocabulario dentro de cualquier lengua, “Knowledge of a language demands mastery of its vocabulary as much as of its grammar²” (Wilkins, 1972, p.19) “When our first goal is communication, when we have little of the new language at our command, it is the lexicon that is crucial. If we can but find the words, we know we can take care of our immediate needs³” (Hatch, 1978, p.74).

El aprendizaje, variedad y dominio del vocabulario de una lengua (incluyendo todas sus categorías) serán los que permitan al niño o niña su correcta comunicación con las personas que compartan con él o ella el idioma. Es por ello que la enseñanza del léxico cobra tanta importancia y constituye el grueso de este trabajo. El manejo y dominio del vocabulario es el ingrediente principal para la comunicación. Como explica McLaren, no importa lo mucho que se sepa sobre el lenguaje en sí, si fallan las palabras, el mensaje no puede ser transmitido (2004, p.284).

Si ya este proceso puede resultar a veces tedioso y algo complicado cuando se estudia y aprende la lengua materna, más lo será cuando se trate del aprendizaje de una segunda lengua.

² Traducción (Wilkins, 1972, p.19): “El conocimiento de una lengua requiere tanto el dominio de su vocabulario como el de su gramática.”

³ Traducción (Hatch, 1978, p.74): “Cuando nuestro primer objetivo es la comunicación, cuando disponemos de un dominio escaso de un idioma nuevo, es el léxico el que se convierte en algo crucial”.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK. FOUNDATION AND TEACHING IMPLICATIONS

1.1. Sense and link of this project with the Primary Education Reality

1.1.1 Primary Education curriculum

In order to learn about the relation between the study topic with the reality of Primary schools, we will dive into the curriculum of this scholar stage and its implications. So, taking into account the “Decreto Foral 27/2007 del 19 de marzo” and some considerations made by the Education Department of Navarre, we will be able to understand why second language learning is so crucial nowadays, and, as a result vocabulary learning too.

a) *The communicative competence*

Although there are eight basic competences, we will focus just on the only one which is related to our field of study, the communicative competence.

The *linguistic or communicative competence* constitutes a vital factor for learning development in different curricular areas. This competence involves the ability to understand and express messages accurately and implies correct use of grammar, *vocabulary*, pronunciation and spelling (McLaren, 2004, p. 283).

Language is a tool for both oral and written communication; it represents, interprets and fosters an understanding of reality, the building and communication of knowledge and it regulates stream of thoughts, emotions and behaviour.

All the knowledge, skills and attitudes which belong to this competence promote expressing thoughts, experiences, emotions, opinions; having conversations, critical judgements; taking decisions and enjoying reading, listening and expressing oneself by means of oral or written texts. That is the reason why the role of *vocabulary teaching* is so crucial, because, to express oneself and to understand what others say, specific and accurate vocabulary knowledge is necessary.

One of the main objectives of this stage is the acquisition of this competence in at least one foreign language, so that children are able to express and understand simple

messages and manage to communicate in daily situations. So, as it has been pointed out before, vocabulary has an essential part during language acquisition and communicative competence development to express and understand those messages.

b) The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

The teaching of foreign language (in this case of English in Primary Schools) is guided by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. CEFR is a common basis which defines the objectives and the methodology of the second language teaching-learning process. It also defines the lexicon supposed to be reached in each level.

There are five sections in which the language contents are divided and in which the schema followed in order to achieve the linguistic competence is included and taken into account. In each section there are some items which provide some strategies and skills children should develop. We should stress those sections related to vocabulary.

The first two ones are devoted to communicative skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and vocabulary is one of the most important elements in all of them. When developing these skills, children need to have enough lexicon to interact with peers and texts, both to understand them and to provide information. The fourth section implies the reflexive use of different language aspects such as grammatical and orthographical rules, morphosyntactic elements, syntactic possibilities, word-formation mechanisms...

c) General objectives

We will point out some of the general objectives proposed in the curriculum which have to do with the teaching of English and which are related to our research aim (vocabulary teaching). One of them is the acquisition of the *specific vocabulary to achieve an accurate expression, using a dictionary, some auxiliary techniques and using the library as a basic resource*. Furthermore, one of the abilities children should develop is the *identification of phonetic aspects, rhythm, accentuation, intonation, as well as linguistic structures and lexical aspects to be used as basic communicative elements*.

d) *Contents related to the project*

- ☐ *Vocabulary* and functional grammar knowledge
- ☐ Intonation and pronunciation → especially the spoken form of a word
- ☐ Awareness of several kinds of oral interaction
- ☐ Knowledge of a varied range of literary and non-literary texts
- ☐ Understanding of the main characteristics of written and oral styles and registers → especially at word level
- ☐ Awareness of social conventions and some cultural aspects, as well as the varieties of the language depending on geography or cultural or communicative aspects → related to the register of a word
- ☐ Knowledge of a wide range of sense relations → related to associations and collocations of a word.

1.1.2. *Integrated Language Treatment and new language models*

Although there is a curricular area that focuses on the learning process of one foreign language, *the Education Department can authorize some of the content areas of the curriculum to be taught in foreign languages*. However, *children should acquire the basic terminology both in their mother language and in the foreign language*.

a) *CLIL*

The teaching of content through English is being introduced since the early 1990's and it has as main objective: to reinforce children's language learning. It increases the possibilities of language use in varied situations, it reinforces the content learning of varied subjects and it gives more realistic situations for language use. Language is learnt through all the communicative activities and tasks which are involved in the learning process.

"CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) constitutes a reservoir of *contents, meanings and topics which can become the object of real communication*" (Dalton-Puffer, 2007, p.3) because it treats the curriculum contents through a foreign language so the language is the unique possible vehicle for communication. The language is

been treated in a specific context so that all the elements of the linguistic system make sense.

As Dalton-Puffer (2007) argues, CLIL classrooms provide a real language environment where the language can be picked up and used. The school and the classroom are transformed into a natural environment where the second language vocabulary is the medium for communicating. The learner is surrounded by the foreign language and this situation stimulates the learning process of the language.

As Dalton-Puffer (2008) claims, *some low-level English morphological aspects are improved* (the third person singular –s, irregular past tenses...) *and they become internalized and automated*.

Related to our research topic, this author adds that “the enlargement of the lexicon is easily the most widely and clearly formulated expectation of what CLIL can and should achieve” (Dalton-Puffer, 2007, p.10)

1.1.3. Implications for our topic

Vocabulary teaching is important in Primary Education because pupils need the language to survive in a changing society which requires their *linguistic competence*. As we have seen that vocabulary is one of the biggest components of language, it is logical to assume *children will require vocabulary in order to communicate*.

The number of words children need to know depends on the communicative purpose they are trying to achieve and on the different texts they are going to deal with. *The reason why we need to teach vocabulary is because it can improve the acquisition of grammar and communicative skills*. Knowing the words in texts (oral or written) permits to understand the whole discourse meaning.

Besides, learners tend to feel that their main difficulties when communicating come from the use and understanding of vocabulary. Simply increasing learners' vocabulary without paying attention to putting their knowledge into practice will not be effective. *The approaches explained before* (the one from the Decreto Foral and the CLIL one) *promote tasks whose purpose is communication and the role of vocabulary in them is essential*.

As we have said, *vocabulary is the main element in communication*. If learners need to cover the whole range of language skills, then, receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge and learning are needed, and, as a result, the *teaching-learning process of vocabulary is crucial*.

Teachers need to watch for those words that may inhibit a student from smooth integration with the new speech community and help the student find alternatives which are more appropriate in the new environment. Teachers may choose to teach different words depending on whether they focus on the written or spoken mode.

Vocabulary learning is not an end in itself. A rich vocabulary makes the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing easier to perform. So, consequently, if we teach vocabulary, we will be following a way that leads us to what the Decreto Foral and new methodologies (CLIL) suggest: the *communicative competence*.

1.2. State of the Art

1.2.1. The learning process and the language learning

Before going ahead with our principal theme of investigation, we should go a bit deeper into how the learning process takes place, in order to be able to understand how children will acquire vocabulary and what teachers should take into account when teaching lexicon. We will focus on the constructivist theory because we find it crucial for language acquisition. The role which context and communication take is one of the most important factors in this approach, so, it has a direct relation with the new methodological and communicative suggestions that are made from the curriculum and the European Framework.

According to Vygotsky, children learn through socially meaningful interactions, so language is an important social facilitator of learning. Second language learning is a social learning process because it is the way of communication among people when dealing with the language. It requires an activation and regulation of the elements (background), active participation in interactive activities, strategies and socio-linguistic knowledge (Verdú, Jorda & Coyle, 2002).

As all of us master our mother tongue, it provides an innate linguistic system that helps the child with the complex grammatical structure that will be shared by all the language, so the knowledge of the native language will be the basis for the understanding and internalization of a second language. This system will guide the learning process of vocabulary, grammar... (Tompkins, G.E, 2009)

For Stephen Krashen, as Verdú, Jorda and Coyle (2002) explain, the exposure to the second language is the main cause for its acquisition. Children learn when they realize that the input which comes from the environment (in that case, the English classroom) provokes a gap in their communication process. On the other hand Swain's comprehensible output theory gives great importance to child's linguistic production in order to acquire the second language. When the learner is trying to communicate he is forced to pay attention to language and choose those required words to communicate.

According to Anderson, a second language learner develops two main kinds of knowledge: declarative knowledge and procedure knowledge. The first one is based on the linguistic system itself (grammar, lexicon, socio-linguistic rules...) and it is characterized by linguistic memorized patterns; the second one is knowledge about the correct use of language.

When teaching a foreign language the most important goal during instruction times should be vocabulary and concepts development and acquisition within meaningful oral and written contexts. (O'Donnell, M. P., & Wood, M. 2005)

1.2.2. The language system

First of all we should define the word language. For Halliday (1978) language is the system used for creating meaning through socially shared conversations.

There are, at least, four main systems that build this whole language system (G. E. Tompkins, 2009, p. 9), but we will focus just on the one related to our topic.

- The phonological system (which comprises all the speech sounds that are used in a given language)

In English, it is compounded by 44 sounds while it has only 26 letters.

□ The morphosyntactic system

Syntax refers to the grammatical structures of a language, the ways in which people arrange the words to form sentences. When children start school they have acquired an implicit knowledge of the grammatical rules of their language through their meaningful use, so it will help when studying and learning a second or foreign language (O'Donnell, M. P., & Wood, M. 2005).

What is important in English is the word order and English learners must arrange words into a sequence that makes sense.

Another element of this system is word forms. The morphemes are the smallest meaningful units in a language; they can be word parts that change the meaning of a word (affixes, suffixes). As they learn, children also learn how to combine words and word parts (for creating plural, nouns, adverbs...). They also learn how to combine two or three free morphemes to form compound words.

□ The semantic system

What builds this system is the vocabulary or lexicon of a language. This component of the language system is an experimental knowledge that involves derivation of meaning from language. As O'Donnell and Wood (2005) state, what children master about semantics is the meanings of words and the concept they represent as well as their relationships.

While children are learning new words, they are also learning that many words have more than one meaning. Meaning is usually based on context and on surrounding words.

As they learn some of the meanings of words, they also learn the shades of meanings, some of their synonyms and antonyms, how the words can behave and figurative language related to those words they learn or know.

Semantic cues provide learners with skills to use what they know about meanings in order to predict and work out the identification of unknown words in context. (O'Donnell, M. P., & Wood, M. 2005).

□ Pragmatic system

This system is related to the social and cultural aspects of language use. Language use varies among and depending on social classes, cultural and ethnic groups, and geographic regions.

According to O'Donnell and Wood (2005), syntax and semantics provide powerful clues that help learners to identify unknown words. The two cueing systems if combined are commonly referred as context cues because when one is using both of them in interaction, he is using context to predict meaning and to understand the text (oral or written).

The following point of investigation will focus on the teaching-learning process of vocabulary; but, as it has been observed in the previous paragraphs, it will be connected to two of these systems: the syntactic and the semantic systems. In both of them we can find the presence of vocabulary or lexicon. Whereas the presence of vocabulary in the semantic system is more noticeable (because it conveys most of the content), the presence of vocabulary in the syntactic is also perceptible when talking about word formation.

1.2.3. The elements of vocabulary, a little study about words

Words are used to represent concepts. "Increasing awareness of the influence of prior knowledge or conceptual background on comprehension has underscored the importance of vocabulary development since building vocabulary is synonymous with building concepts" (O'Donnell, M. P., & Wood, M. 2005, p. 60).

The vocabulary or lexicon of a language is "all the words that comprise that language" (O'Donnell, M. P., & Wood, M. 2005, p. 57). So, a person's lexicon or vocabulary is built by this person's individual store of understood words in memory.

Vocabulary does not just consist of knowing the meaning and the form of a word because there is a potential knowledge that can be learnt about a word. As Schmitt (2002) argues, most of them are necessary to properly know a word and to be able to use it in different situations. And, of course, they are not learnt at the same time because they are likely to be learnt in a gradual manner. Although these different types of knowledge are presented as separate, they are interrelated.

a) The meaning(s) of the word

Many words have more than one meaning and they acquire more meanings as the society becomes more complex, so finer shades of meaning are necessary (Tompkins, G.E, 2009). Furthermore, words assume additional meanings when an affix is added or when they are combined in order to create compound words.

It is a widespread assumption that the meanings of a word correspond to its dictionary definitions. However, meaning consists of the relationship between a word and its referent (the concept which is being represented by the word). And this relationship is not innate, it depends on the use of the word that people have developed.

The capability to represent it mentally depends on the amount of exposures to various kinds of the concept that the word represents. We can understand from this, that “words are labels for concepts, which themselves encapsulate our limited experience of the actual world reality” (Hirtle, 1994 in Schmitt, 2002, p. 23). So meaning is a relationship between the word and its represented concept represented.

O'Donnell and Wood (2005) state that there are levels of word knowledge meaning:

- ☐ Associative → it is a general sense of a word's meaning based on association with related words. Memorizing definitions of words often helps achieve this superficial level.
- ☐ Comprehensive → it involves the understanding of the word's meanings when it is read in context but it may not result in their appropriate use when talking or writing.
- ☐ Generative → level in which the learner can produce and use the meaning of a word in new contexts.

b) The written form of the word

It covers the way a word is written, that is, the orthographical part of a word. When learning a word it is a key component because it is the visual information a reader takes from texts and it helps to recognize the word and all its features, as well as to decode the word (Schmitt, N., 2002). Likewise, we can differentiate two processes related to the written form of a word: the production process, which involves the

spelling when writing the word, and the receptive process that covers the decoding process when reading a word.

c) The spoken form of the word

It implies not only knowing and being able to pronounce the word in connected speech, but also being able to recognize it when heard in a continuous flow of speech. So, one needs to know the phonemes that compound the word, how they sound together and how many syllables the word has, as well as which one carries the stress. It is also important to be aware of the pitch, the volume and the length of the syllable. Probably, the most difficult part of this knowledge is the one related to the listening because, unlike in the written form, the word's boundaries are not so easy to recognize so, when hearing connected speech, it is more complicated to pick out individual words.

d) The grammatical behaviour of the word

It has to do with the pattern or patterns the word typically occurs in. The main aspects related to this grammatical knowledge are the word class and its morphology. The first one, known as well as part of speech, indicates the grammatical category of the word, labelling it as a noun, an adjective, a verb, an adverb, etcetera and, depending on that, how the words behave in sentences or patterns. On the other hand, morphology covers aspects connected to affixes and how they are attached to words, as well as compounding.

e) The collocations of the word

As it is explained by Nation (1990) the term collocation (word partnership) can be understood etimologically as words that occur together:

Col- (from com- → together with), -loc- (to place or put), -ate (verb suffix) , -ion (noun suffix).

It means words that occur together with greater than random frequency.

So there are some words which can only occur when they come with one of their "partner". The collocations of a word are the company that it requires.

f) The register of the word

Schmitt (2002) explains that register refers to the implicit and extra meaning information that words provide. It makes us use a word depending on the context, the addressee.... It is related to connotation aspects (what can be hidden in a word and what is not said when produced).

There are different variations of register.

- ☐ temporal variation: words may become “old” and others may be created in order to substitute them.
- ☐ geographical variation: it is related to where the language is spoken and to the social class one belongs to. It refers to some grammatical and lexical changes.
- ☐ social role variation: power or social relationships between the transmitter and the recipient. It directly affects the level of the formality of words.
- ☐ field of discourse variation: it is understood as the style of discourse or genre that some texts or fields require. This concerns syntactic and, of course, lexical choices.
- ☐ mode of discourse variation: it involves the use of some words when talking or when writing.

Each communicational situation or context needs to take into account the register of words. The register information allows selecting the best word for each context.

g) The associations of the word

It refers to how words are mentally organized and which words come to mind when a stimulus word is provided. So it is absolutely related to sense relations (hyponymy, metonymy, synonymy, antonymy...) and word families, semantic fields... The way words and their relations are organized in mind (schemas) is the most essential component of this knowledge of words (Schmitt, N., 2002).

h) The frequency of the word

There are some words that are more likely to occur than others when using the general language. The frequency of words involves that some words like “talks” that

will appear more times than words like “regarding to” during general and non-specific communicational processes. Of course, this depends on the context where the words are used.

Before going ahead with the following section (where the vocabulary teaching-learning process will be explained) we will try to present some explanations about words’ characteristics (root, affixes, ...), sense relations, borrowed words and figurative language because it will help us to focus on our main goal: being aware of how vocabulary should be taught and learnt and suggesting some methods, strategies and materials which may help us achieve our goal.

A *root word* can be a morpheme or a basic part of a word to which both the suffixes and prefixes are added. In English, most of the root words come from Latin, Greek and Old English (Tompkins, G.E 2009).

Referring to that, *affixes* are morphemes that are added to root words in order to change the meaning or the word class (part of speech). We can differentiate *prefixes* (affixes added at the beginning of the word) or *suffixes* (affixes added at the end of the word). If we remove the suffix or prefix of a word, we can obtain a real word. It has to be taken into account that some affixes have several meanings so it can be confusing when learning vocabulary.

When talking about *sense relations or association* of a word we find an average variety of them.

Synonymy→ it is the relationship between two words or phrases that have the same or nearly the same meaning. It can occur between two words which belong to the same word-class (as in thin and slim, both of them adjectives) or between words that belong to different parts of speech (as in sleeping and asleep). *Synonyms* provide options to express oneself more accurately or precisely. In English there are so many synonyms because of borrowed words.

Antonymy→ it involves opposite meanings. On the one hand, there are *binary antonyms*, which are pairs of words which exclude each other, if one takes place the other one can not occur (yes/no, true/false). On the other hand there are *converses*, antonyms that indicate a relationship between two things or people but in opposite

order (as in child and mother). And, finally, we find *gradable antonyms* which are words that have different meanings but, although they are extremes of a continuous scale, they are not mutually exclusive (furious/upset).

Hyponymy → it is a sense relation between words in which one word is included in the meaning of the other one called superordinate term (as cat in mammals).

Metonymy → it is a sense relation between two words in which one word is part of a whole (as branch in tree).

Homonymy → it occurs when one form (written or spoken form) has two different meanings and origins. We differentiate between *homographs* (words with the same spelling but different pronunciation, ex. row) and *homophones* (words with the same pronunciation and different spelling, ex. male and mail).

On the other hand, we can talk about *lexical creativity* when referring to vocabulary learning. The following phenomena are an illustration of this:

Clipping → it is a morphological process in which a part of a word, usually one or more unstressed syllables are omitted or shortened. It is quite common in spoken forms of words and in informal style.

Abbreviations → similar to the previous explained phenomenon, it is the process which shortens a written form of a word, but only at the written level (ex. Km)

Acronyming → it is a shortening process in which a phrase is replaced by a word built with the first letters of its words (ex. UFO)

Blending → it is a process in which two words or phrases are replaced by some parts of them, ordinarily by the first part of the first word and the last one of the second. It is a case of double clipping in which at least one of the elements is fragmentary when compared with its corresponding un-compounded word form.

Borrowing → it involves taking words from another language and it is an important cause of language change.

Finally, a component of the richness of a language is its *figurative language*. In English we observe two kinds; on the one hand, idioms and, on the other, metaphors. How a word is used in both of them makes the difference between each one.

Idioms→ it involves groups of words that have a special meaning and they always come together (ex. it rains cats and dogs = it rains a lot).

Metaphors→ they are similes and they compare something to something else (her hair was so blond that it was like gold).

1.2.4. The vocabulary teaching-learning process

Acquiring vocabulary involves more than looking words up in the dictionary and memorizing meanings. Vocabulary can be acquired only through repeated exposures in context full of meaning. Nevertheless, as Schmitt (2002) paraphrases from Nation (1995), it is really difficult to develop a theory of acquisition of vocabulary because there have been fragmentary studies of it and there are areas that are completely unknown (as how the learning of unknown words is influenced by other words already learnt).

Being able to understand how vocabulary has been faced during History and which role it has taken in teaching second languages gives us some clues to cope with its current teaching-learning process.

a) History of vocabulary teaching

Schmitt (2002) explains that since second languages started to be studied in the second century B.C the way vocabulary and language have been taught has changed deeply. It was first regarded as the main part of discourse, so knowing the alphabet, syllables and words was essential for developing connected speech. Later, during the medieval period and Renaissance, vocabulary was almost forgotten because the focus was on grammar. Furthermore, as it continued for long times, the vocabulary teaching-learning was devoted to bilingual lists in which words were translated from the first language to the target one.

During the nineteenth century and later (until 1970), some new approaches emerged (Grammar-Translation, Direct Method, Audiolingualism, Situational Approach...) focusing their contents on grammar and memorizations. Students were expected to learn vocabulary through bilingual word lists and bilingual dictionaries, as well as in a natural way thanks to interactions during lessons. For example, audiolingualism activities were designed to reinforce pronunciation, sentence patterns... but, drills and

memorization were their main pillars and learners were supposed to acquire language through drills instead of through target language analysis. As this approach needed quite easy and simple vocabulary the Situational Approach tried to treat vocabulary in a more principled way. Nonetheless, it was not until 1970 and the arrival of communicative approaches that vocabulary itself became important. However, there were few guidelines about how to handle vocabulary, and, in the very beginnings, vocabulary was pushed into the background. Nowadays, “current best practice includes both a principled selection of vocabulary, often according to frequency lists, and an instruction methodology that encourages meaningful engagement with words” (Schmitt, N., 2002: 14). Grammar and vocabulary come together because it has been seen that there is more lexical patterning than was imaged; that is the reason why it is difficult to think of vocabulary and grammar separately.

There have been a lot of attempts to create word lists in which the most frequent and basic words used in English were collected, but some controversies have been found when trying to use them (ex. some words or word units as “thank you” were not included in those lists). It is essential to understand that the vocabulary required in any situation depends on the contexts: so, sometimes, these lists may not be useful.

b) Receptive and productive knowledge of words

Receptive knowledge→ being able to recognize a word when it is read or heard, as well as being capable of distinguishing it from similar words and having an expectation of the grammatical patterns. It is a result of experience and exposure.

Productive knowledge→ knowing how to pronounce, write, spell a word, its grammatical patterns and its collocations; being able to use them, as well as knowing its frequency and its register and being able to apply this knowledge when using the word.

It is related to what is known as active and passive vocabulary. *Active vocabulary* is the one which can be understood and recalled and is ready for communication. In order to achieve the activation of words a lot of practice is necessary. On the other hand, *passive vocabulary* is that vocabulary which can be recognized when heard or written but can not be used automatically (Madrid, D., & McLaren, N., 2004).

c) *Vocabulary acquisition*

As it can be deduced after having studied the knowledge of a word, vocabulary acquisition is incremental because all this knowledge is not acquired simultaneously. When met for the first time, the form (either written or spoken) and some sense of meaning will be probably picked up, but more exposures will be required to master the knowledge of a word.

Traditionally, it has been believed words are first learnt receptively and then, they become productive. But it is difficult to state this because there are many definitions for these two processes and because researches done about it lead to different results. However, studies have generally shown that learners are capable to show more receptive than productive knowledge. Besides, it is thought that at least an initial productive ability is influenced by a receptive one. Because of that, it is more accurate to talk about mastery of word-knowledge, because each word-knowledge may be both receptively known as productively known (Schmitt, N., 2002).

In addition, O'Donnell and Wood (2005) suggest a vocabulary acquisition process with four stages.

The first stage is known as the *perceptual level*. It involves general awareness or literal knowledge. Basic characteristics are recognized but there is not word understanding. *Perception and observation* are the main cognitive processes involved.

The *contextual level* is the second stage and it implies an expansion of the attribute awareness of a word due to several exposures to it in different contexts. This leads to the comparison or noting of similarities and differences between the unfamiliar concept and the known ones. *Association and comparison* are the main cognitive processes involved.

In the third stage, *conceptual level*, children develop the ability to identify examples of the concept. Pupils are able to recognize the essential attributes that define the concept. *Downward classification* (the categories are given and children have to classify) is involved and the concept is fully formed.

During the final stage, *classification level*, learners are able to assign the new concept to a larger category which includes other concepts. It requires similarities' recognition

and word class creation. As children are the ones who propose the basis for classification, this is known as *upward classification*.

d) Explicit and incidental vocabulary learning

Vocabulary learning depends on experience, as O'Donnell and Wood (2005) claim, prior knowledge and relevant experiences enable students to learn new words. However, when the unknown word goes beyond the learners' experiences, it will be difficult to learn words from context, so more direct instruction will be necessary.

Explicit learning → learning occurs through the focused study of words, it is time-consuming because it focuses attention directly on information to be learnt

Incidental learning → learning occurs through exposure when the attention is not focused on language learning itself, but on its use and communicative purposes. It is slower and more gradual.

Both kinds of learning are necessary for second language learners and both of them should be treated complementarily.

The more one manipulates a word, the more likely to retain its different knowledge, so explicit learning is useful to assimilate and acquire words deeply. There are many ways/strategies/activities to promote this explicit learning (they will be seen later). On the other hand, in order to improve the incidental learning of a word it is necessary to carry out as many exposures in different contexts as possible.

We find, as Schmitt (2002) indicates, that there are some word-knowledge that are more likely to be learnt during incidental learning. For instance, the collocations of the word will be better acquired as results of many exposures in varied contexts; but, on the other hand, the spelling and the pronunciation are better to be acquired through explicit learning.

But teachers should bear in mind several aspects when giving particular attention to a word and when teaching it explicitly. As Nation (1990) argues these are some of the criteria teachers should observe:

- ☐ The frequency and importance of the word for the children
- ☐ The difficulty of the word

- The necessity of the word for subsequent activities
- The features of regular patterns that occur in the word and that will help children master other words

e) The role of memory in the vocabulary teaching-learning process

Attrition → it is based on the forgetting of words that occurs when a second language is not used for a long time.

As Schmitt (2002) argues, lexical knowledge is more likely to be forgotten because it is constructed by individual units rather than series of rules.

On the other hand, in order to understand how words are assimilated and placed in our mind we have to explore the different types of memory.

Short-term memory → it is used to hold information while the process of information is taking place. Information can be held just for few seconds. This memory has small storage capacity.

Long-term memory → it retains information to be used later in the future. It has almost an unlimited storage capacity but recovering information for it is quite long.

The object of vocabulary learning is to translate the lexical information from the short-term memory to the long-term memory. The expanding rehearsal principle states that the more one expands practice, the more one remembers words. When teaching and learning second languages, revision and use of words minimize forgetting.

f) The importance of reading

Tompkins (2009) argues when teaching vocabulary to children we have to take into account that they are used to assuming that every word has just one meaning and, sometimes (and related to the spoken form which will be explained later) words that sound alike are quite confusing to them.

The more experiences children have with words, the more knowledgeable about words and their literal and figurative meaning they become. They learn some words are quite similar in meaning while others are opposite. They learn as well that some words sound alike and others words have multiple figurative meanings and how words have been borrowed from languages around the world. They also learn about how

words have been created and, after many experiences with them, they have fun when working and playing with them.

As we have said before, the more children are exposed to language and context, the more they acquire vocabulary. Reading is one of the best ways of achieving this statement. "Studies showed that additional reading led to a tangible increase in learners' vocabulary" (Schmitt, 2002 p.150). Besides, Nation (1990) adds that using simplified reading materials provides the chance to continue learning vocabulary.

Some authors, such as O'Donnell and Wood (2005), present some reading programs and approaches that help when teaching vocabulary. It has to be said that the power of written texts is enormous in that situation.

Thanks to *basal reading programs* children are exposed to series of books which are graded according to their length and difficulty. At the beginners' levels, words which have been introduced before are included in these books. Besides, workbooks and skills sheets accompany these books focusing their attention on word identification skills, phonics, pattern words and direct teaching of sight vocabulary.

Another suggestion to teach and learn vocabulary is through *whole-language approaches* whose main principle is teaching from whole to part in meaningful contexts, putting emphasis on meaning. Stories, poems and chants are chosen because of their appeal and meaning for children. As they provide familiar and patterned texts, learners can use cueing systems to identify words.

On the other hand, Linse (2007) proposes the *use of predictable books* for teaching vocabulary and language skills. She says that predictable stories are enjoyable and contain repetitive phrases and language which can be easily acquired. Besides, predictable books contain pictures that help clarify words or sentences which are repeated. The reasons why using predictable words seem to be clear: they illustrate specific aspects of grammar and vocabulary (word order, adjectives...), they provide content by using controlled patterns, they help when teaching pronunciation and they develop language skills.

Reading provides several benefits:

- ☐ vocabulary expansion
- ☐ opportunities to practice learning strategies
- ☐ consolidation of words which are partially known
- ☐ contextualization

g) The role of music in vocabulary learning

Paquette and Rieg (2008) provide us with an enjoyable way of teaching language and thus, vocabulary as well. They suggest that songs present opportunities for developing automaticity in language process because of their repetitive nature. Music should also be integrated in teaching because, for them, it is a way of extending vocabulary and comprehension skills. Songs can be used to teach sentence patterns, vocabulary, pronunciation, rhythms, parts of speech... so they may integrate most word-knowledge. Moreover, songs may be also used to help students become aware of homophonic words.

h) Teaching and learning the word-knowledge

- ☐ The meaning(s) of the word

Taking into account what we have studied about the meaning of words we can say, according to Schmitt (2002), that when introducing and teaching words that represent categories, teachers should give lists of semantic features for this category or by listing their hiperonyms or hyponyms. The use of sense relations seems to be a useful way of defining new words. Because meaning is typically flexible, numerous exposures to a word in various contexts is necessary.

- ☐ The written form of the word

Teachers ought to choose words with regular spellings as much as possible and they should also show children patterns and compare the spelling of new words to spelling of known ones (Nation, 1990). Recognition exercises are, for Schmitt (2002), most suitable activities or exercises for children who are learning to decode words and they will develop sight vocabulary. When talking about spelling, students should develop the sound-symbol correspondences. They should, as well, develop a mental image of

words. Teachers can take advantage of the orthographical similarities between members of the same word family.

☐ The spoken form of the word

Nation (1990) states that at the beginning of English learning, difficult sounds and consonant clusters should be gradually introduced. So, new words should not contain too many difficult sounds. Schmitt (2002) indicates that word stress is really important when teaching the spoken form of a word because knowing the stress patterns should help to decode them when heard. Teachers can pronounce the word in isolation, but it is recommended to do it in connected speech too.

☐ The grammatical behaviour of the word

Teachers can show learners words which have similar or parallel usage or pattern in their mother tongue, avoiding vocabulary items with unpredictable patterns (Nation, 1990). The most regular affixes should be taught initially and once students are comfortable with them the focus should lie on irregular ones (Schmitt, 2002). Using word parts will help students become independent vocabulary learners.

☐ The collocations of the word

Teaching vocabulary in collocations is a reaction against teaching words in lists. Words which are naturally associated in text are learnt more easily.

☐ The register of the word

Teachers should explain the context and situation where the words should be used (Nation, 1990) because teaching the meaning is not enough. After having absorbed the meaning of a word, the teacher could introduce its register. Children may be taught about words which are considered offensive, differences between American and British English... The stronger the register marking, the more necessary it is to know it.

☐ The associations of the word

They can be taught through semantic-maps, sense relations or the use of words in context; as well as through root and affixes study (although this knowledge is not contemplated in this word-knowledge).

☐ The frequency of the word

It will depend on teacher's decision and on contexts. If children are dealing with specific academic texts they will find which words are frequent and which ones are not.

1.2.5. Methods, strategies and activities to teach and learn vocabulary

Once we have studied word elements and their implications, as well as learning, learning language approaches and the vocabulary teaching-learning process some methods, strategies and activities to teach and learn vocabulary are going to be presented.

Before going ahead with some suggestions, we did a little research to understand how vocabulary has been worked in schools during many years with the aim of setting out new methods and objectives when talking about English learning. We have polled some Primary English teachers and some students who completed this stage years ago. We should say that this survey can not be considered as a strict and scientific survey and we can not extract exact results from it because the number of answered surveys which were received was quite small. Nevertheless, it can help us to have an idea about the importance of vocabulary in Primary School and to be aware of which methodology is followed for its transmission. (See survey templates in Appendixes)

On the one hand, most of people who were polled (both ex primary pupils and teachers) marked the importance of vocabulary between 3 and 4 in a 0 to 5 scale (being 0 nothing and 5 really important). However, when asked about which of the language elements they considered the most essential, the diversity of the answers raised (being really different those ex pupils answered from those teachers set out). First ones consider the ability to express oneself with enough fluency, as well as the proper comprehension, being able to speak and listen in a foreign language and being able to put it into practice in real situations as the most important aspects when learning a second language. It is surprising one of the subject's answer because she indicates that, for her, grammatical structures and rules are the most fundamental elements of language learning. On the contrary, teachers present answers focused on pupils' role instead of on language. For them, what is really essential during teaching-learning process of a foreign language is the students' motivation and illusion for the language acquisition.

When indicating which techniques teachers use when teaching English vocabulary, most of them set out that pictures, mimics and realia are the main resources or strategies. However, conceptual maps, the dictionary as a teaching resource, definitions and word lists are the methods they use the least. We have to take into account that these teachers have been teaching English in this stage at least 10 years and they develop their profession in different grades.

However, ex Primary pupils set out that the methodology they were taught through was mainly based on bilingual word lists to be memorized. As a result, we could state that teachers are changing their methodology, replacing those lists with more significant resources and strategies. Nonetheless, it can be observed that some activities, methods and strategies that will be presented later in this section continue without having enough importance in the vocabulary teaching-learning process (use of hyponymy, synonymy, dictionary, contexts...).

Furthermore, ex pupils who have been polled specify that if words had been related to other ones, if they had been focused on their real use in communicative contexts, if descriptions and explanations had been provided until get the core meaning, if pupils had not memorized them and if pupils had used more texts, books and songs, their word acquisition and assimilation would have been more accurate. In short, if the learning had been more contextualized, their word acquisition and assimilation would have been more accurate.

Finally, when the question about which word-knowledge is taught and learnt is set out, all teachers agree on their answers stating that word-meaning, word-associations, spoken-form and written-form are the elements which are taught the most. And, on the contrary, word-figurative meaning, word-collocations, word-register and word-formation are the aspects which are taught the least. Those ex Primary pupils agree as well with teachers on their affirmative answers (word-meaning, word-associations...) and on their negative answers.

So, taking our survey results into account, the following information will provide new fresh and practical applications for more significant vocabulary learning, trying to break the habit of teaching vocabulary in repetitive, tedious and memorizing ways. These activities and strategies provide opportunities for students to explore word

meanings which have been found in texts. None of these methods or strategies could be part of isolated activities with non-relation to contexts or texts. The aim of these techniques, which seem to take vocabulary out of context, is to reinforce vocabulary acquisition.

Through the following suggestions, children explore word meanings and make associations among them. Children are not simply writing words and their definitions, they can be aware of words and their uses in texts.

a) Approximate definitions

The purpose of this kind of activities is to help students develop as many associations as possible for new words, so that they can acquire a sense of their appropriate use. They involve categorizing new words and concepts in various ways. Being able to group or classify new words requires understanding of new concepts involved and awareness of the relationships which exist among them.

As O'Donnell and Wood (2005) explain, in order to follow a correct sequence when carrying out these activities, teachers have to ask pupils to speculate on what a word means in a given sentence. Teachers will give some meaning clues and he or she can dramatize words following a sequence like this: writing the word on the board, pronouncing it and, finally, dramatizing the word. It will have a great impact on students and they will likely remember both the word and the performance. After it, in order to achieve a correct use of the word and once everybody has understood the core of the meaning, the teacher asks students to describe situations where the word is present.

b) Use of synonyms and antonyms:

Children can be asked to say some synonyms or antonyms or the teacher may give those to them. Besides, when this activity has been done and some synonyms and antonyms have been presented, children may be asked to arrange them in order of intensity, which involves a word meaning comparison and a great awareness of the differences between similar or non-similar words.

On the other hand children may be given some sentences with some key words underlined and be asked to replace these words by some synonyms or antonyms (O'Donnell, M. P., & Wood, 2005).

c) Sorting activities:

This kind of activities requires students to assign words to given categories based on their similarities and differences. For example, inclusion or exclusion activities are types of exercises which can be included in this section. Both kinds of activities require students to have already developed definitions and awareness of word meaning. If we need to be more sophisticated, children may be who create the categories and then classify the words (O'Donnell, M. P., & Wood, 2005)

Example:

Classify the following words into two categories, you have to create them. Some of the words, if you consider that, can be in both categories.

Flower, stem, leaves, stamen, branch, tree.

Parts of the flower	Parts of the tree
Stem	flower
Leaves	leaves
Stamen	branch

d) Semantic webbing or mapping:

This way of working vocabulary has been seen as an effective tool for introducing new words.

It involves showing graphically how information is related and classified. The relationships which can be shown by doing it are many: synonyms, antonyms, metonyms, hyponyms... It also allows the use of background knowledge, link it to new one and classify it.

In order to follow up this activity there has to be a first stage of brainstorming in which pupils provide their contributions and the teacher recalls all of them on the board (as

they brainstorm, learners are generating a collection of attributes and examples of the concept). After it, the whole class groups the associations into categories (the teacher can be who propose them or the children can propose them).

Thanks to this activity, children become aware of the relationships between words and become aware of the alternatives that can be suggested when focusing on particular words (O'Donnell, M. P., & Wood, 2005)

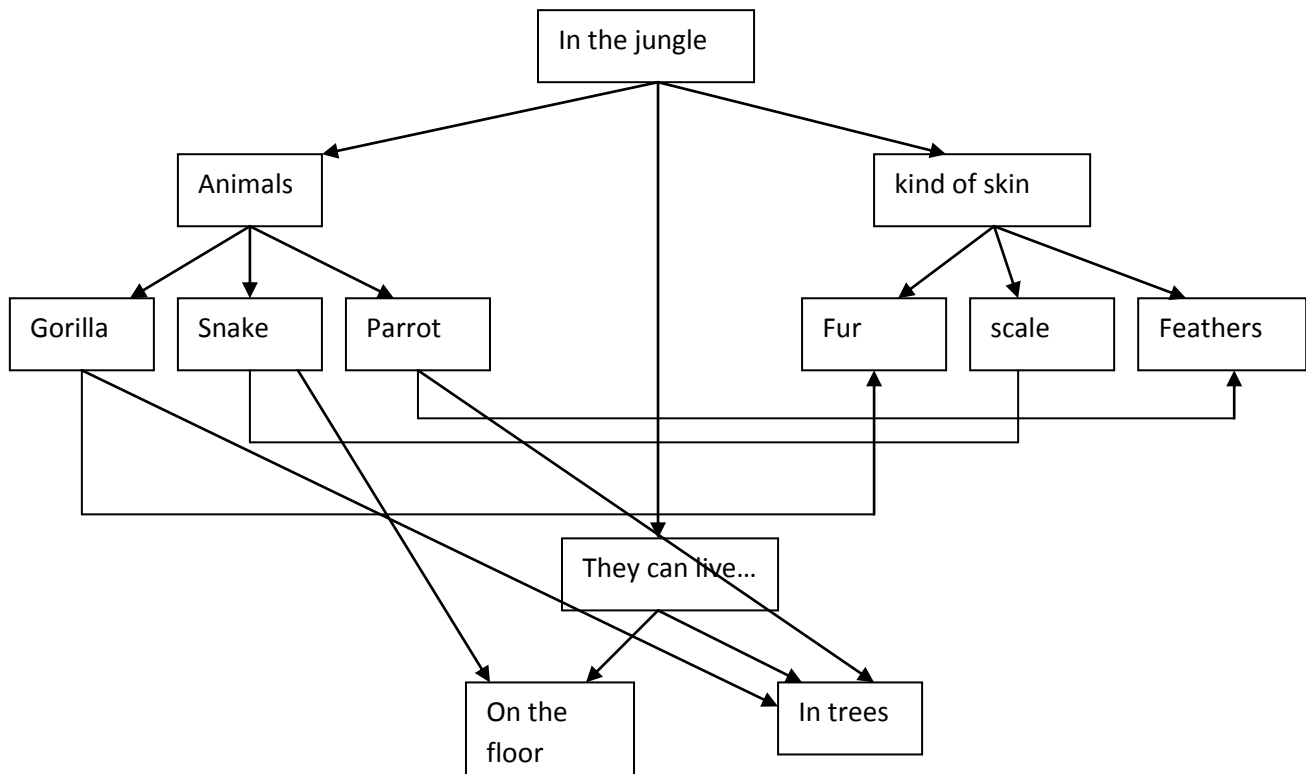


Figure 1. Semantic webbing example

e) Semantic feature analysis:

This effective instructional approach involves activities that help students elaborate meanings for related words by noting their similarities and differences. Discussion about words and their features is a crucial part of this activity. Children may learn new words within categories and semantic features they had not previously associated with the category. This procedure can be applied to content area materials or to general vocabulary instruction (O'Donnell, M. P., & Wood, 2005).

Some related words are shown (such as names of different kinds of birds) and a grid is made to classify them according to distinguish characteristics. It reinforces children's knowledge organization and enables the organization of words in different schemas (Tompkins, G. E., 2009).

	Fur	Beak	Claw	Paw	Muzzle
Lion	X		X	X	X
Penguin		X	X		
Monkey	X			X	X

Figure 2. Semantic feature analysis example

f) Vocabulary notebooks:

O'Donnell and Wood (2005) say that by using this tool, we are promoting independent vocabulary study and learning and, moreover, manipulating the word in different contexts (as it is going to be explained) enables students to "own" the word and incorporate it to their knowledge.

A vocabulary notebook is a personal student's collection of new words. In his or her vocabulary notebook he or she is encouraged or required to record at least three new words each week.

Each word has a page in which be worked. Children have to establish which its meaning is and, then, they can:

- ☐ write the word with a definition and a sentence in which the word is used
- ☐ draw some pictures or paste some magazine pictures in order to illustrate the word and its meaning
- ☐ create a box with associations so they write words which are related to the new word

- ☐ invent a original, interesting, humorous or serious sentence using the word
- ☐ write a list of synonyms and antonyms
- ☐ write a description of the word (part of speech, prefixes, suffixes, derivation, uses...) pretending they are explaining it to a friend

g) Use of context clues:

Students ought to be always encouraged and motivated not only to guess the meaning of a word, but also to justify or explain why they have made this hypothesis. The substitution of the unfamiliar word by a possible synonym is a good way to prove if their hypotheses were right or not.

As it has been said in the previous section ("The elements of vocabulary, a little study about words"), semantic cues enable learners to use their knowledge of the meaning of known concepts in order to predict and work out the meaning of unknown words in context. Reading words in context improves the meaning identification of words, and if contexts are familiar and predictable, this identification is even easier. Besides, not only they will be using the semantic knowledge in order to figure out the meaning, but they will also be using their syntactic knowledge (as said in ("The elements of vocabulary, a little study about words")). So, children can use:

Syntactic cues → grammatical cues such as word order, functional words, word endings...

Semantic cues → the meaning relations among words and sentences

Nation (1990) provides a sequence to extract the meaning from the context (applicable to written contexts):

1. Decide the part of speech of the unknown word
2. Pay attention to the clause or sentence that contains the word
3. Look at the relationship between the rest of clauses and sentences of the text and the sentence where the word is (paying attention to conjunctions, connector, prepositions...)
4. Using the information from the previous steps, guess the meaning of the word

5. Check the guess

Is the part of speech of both words the same?

Replace the unknown word with the guess

Break the word into prefix, root, and suffix. Do the meanings of the parts of the word correspond to the guess?

h) Structural analysis of words (morphological analysis):

Teachers and children identify meaningful parts of the word (as the root, suffixes, affixes...) (O'Donnell, M. P., & Wood, 2005).

So, as explained by Tompkins (2009), children can create lists developed from the same root words and draw a root word cluster to illustrate the relationships of the main root and the words that come from it. It helps learners reduce the amount of memorizing experiences which are traditionally used for learning meaning and spelling.

Moreover, Nation (1990) explains two games which use affixes and roots in order to show how affixes and roots are combined to make words.

- ☐ Wormaking and wordtaking: 300 small cards are used and in each card has a prefix, a suffix or a root. The cards are turned face down and children take cards and try to make words combining them.
- ☐ Stemgo: this game is quite similar to bingo. Children have a sheet with several squares and, in each square there is a prefix or stem written. Children have to write three words with each prefix and stem. Then, the teacher explains two words which contain some of the prefixes and stems and those children who have the same two words written on their sheets win.

i) Listening and retelling stories:

Telling or reading aloud a story or a tale, teachers can provide particularly powerful stimulus for the language development because children can learn the vocabulary which is repeated during the story or meaningful for the general comprehension of it. If they are following the text they can pay attention to the written form and, at the

same time, to the spoken form when the teacher pronounces the word. (O'Donnell, M. P., & Wood, 2005)

When children are asked to retell the story they should be asked to tell as much information as they remember. The purpose of this activity does not focus on the accuracy, but on the amount of pieces of information they can communicate using as many important vocabulary words as they can.

j) Use of dictionaries (either monolingual or bilingual) and thesaurus:

These two resources are important references for examining the meanings of words. Both of them provide synonyms and antonyms and dictionaries also explain the shades of meaning related to words. Besides, as Tompkins claims, the thesaurus organizes the words according to topics or semantic features, so children can dive into categories and slight differences in order to understand the meaning of words and to be able to use words accurately and properly.

k) Word walls:

When teaching vocabulary, teachers may want learners to focus their attention on particular words which are related to a specific topic or theme. An important and useful way of achieving this objective is by writing the words on a poster or word wall and post it in the classroom. Children can see the words and choose them to write or speak when they are trying to communicate.

Before beginning instruction, teachers have to prepare blank word walls made from large sheets of paper and divide them into alphabetical sections. Those words which are interesting, confusing or crucial for the instruction, the reading, the task...are written on the word wall. During the task sequence children can suggest more words to be written on the wall. However, although those words proposed by children will be written later, teachers should plan and anticipate these words children are supposed to propose during the task or unit. And, in doing so, teachers will also identify in advance which of these words are quite known and recognizable for students and which ones are new for them so that these last words can be explained or introduced before the task, the lesson or the unit (Tompkins, G.E., 2009).

Once the words are listed in the word walls children can:

- ☐ create word maps in which a word is highlighted and its meanings are presented. Children incorporate different pieces of information about the word: etymology, word forms, related words, ways to use it in sentences, figurative language...
- ☐ dramatize some words in front of their classmates so that others have to guess it
- ☐ elaborate word sorts by taking several words from the word wall and classify them into two or more categories
- ☐ study and pay attention to word meanings by using thesauri
- ☐ hold a tea party. "Teachers prepare a set of cards with some texts (sentences or paragraphs) [...] At least one "important" word from the word wall is included in each text and highlighted. Students read the cards to classmates. They also talk about the highlighted word and its meaning" (Tompkins, G.E., 2009, p.167)
- ☐ word chains in which students choose a word from the word wall and identify at least three words to sequence before or after the chosen word in order to make a chain with related words.

l) Keyword method:

It combines elements of phonological form and meaning in a mental image. Children can learn a word if they think a word in their mother language that sounds similar to the foreign language one and, after it, they associate this word in their native language to the meaning of the word in the second language. Once they hear the word in the second language they can think about the mental image that represents the word in their mother tongue and they recover the meaning for the foreign language word (Schmitt, N., 2002)

m) Use of visual aids:

All of the following items can help when introducing a word for the first time and when learning its core meaning

- ☐ Realia (real objects which are brought to the class)
- ☐ Mime, facial expressions and gestures

- ☐ flashcards (printed words and their representative pictures, cards, stickers)
- ☐ photographs (images from a computer screen, cut-outs from magazines...)
- ☐ drawings

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Throughout this part we will analyze several English books which are used in Primary schools in the sixth grade of this stage. This observational research will provide a general idea of how English vocabulary is taught during this grade and we will be able to compare and contrast the varied ways of working the lexicon which are suggested by different publishers. After that, some suggestions will be made in order to achieve a better vocabulary acquisition of the language. Likewise, each book will be commented a little bit, so, at the end of this part, not only will we have an idea of the kind of activities that are proposed, but also we will obtain an improvement to be applied in sixth grade English classrooms.

2.1 Stage and grade considerations

First of all, we should know which implications the sixth grade of Primary School has, regarding the developmental and the curricular stage. In this grade, children are 11 to 12 years old, so they are in a huge change process. They are leaving the childhood in order to become teenagers. They are leaving the concrete operational stage behind as well and progressively starting a new cognitive period known as the formal operational period. Nonetheless, it is quite perceptible that they are living a transitional moment where both periods can be appreciated and some of their characteristics coexist at the same developmental time. On the one hand, as Egido reminds us, the sixth graders continue to be subject to real data, present or concrete, not being able to understand some possible things as real things. However, they start considering some non-concrete aspects as real ones, which means, they start developing the ability to take into account what might be, as well as what it is.

Furthermore, they have been learning English at least since they started Primary Education, so they have a great background to benefit from when teaching and learning English vocabulary. Regarding the “Decreto Foral 24/2007, del 19 de marzo” they are thought to identify sounds, letters, words and sentences; know the alphabet; recognize the use of some simple forms and structures; distinguish proper nouns from common nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs; know several vocabulary topics based on antonyms and synonyms, lexical families and semantic fields; use adjectives

(comparative and superlative) and adverbs, prepositions and conjunctions accurately; recognize auxiliary verbs and verb tenses; and use some reference sources in order to clarify some word meanings.

2.2 Objectives

This field study is believed to reach the following objectives:

- To understand how English text books are organized and how lexical contents are exploited in different English sixth grade text books, noting the characteristics of each book and comparing them in order to have a general idea of the teaching-learning process and practices carried out in this grade.
- To suggest some modifications and new methodologies or complementary activities to teach and enrich English vocabulary acquisition, taking as references the ways of work explained in the previous section and focusing on a vocabulary topic worked in one of the analysed books.

2.3 Design

2.3.1. Examining some 6th grade English books

a) Read, C. and Soberón, A (2000). *Wonderworld. Primary 6*. Oxford: Heinemann English Teaching Language

Observing the pupil's book we realize that each unit starts with a comic in which the main vocabulary is presented with some pictures and their written form. After it, a conversation activity comes in order to apply the words which are being studied throughout the unit. The main words are repeated during the whole unit but they are not worked in depth. The book is fully of pictures and the most extensive text is the first one in the unit, where the main structures or words are presented. Besides, and that's a good point, at the end of each unit, children are asked to elaborate a project using the main words and structures, so they apply what they have learnt and convert passive knowledge into active knowledge. Indeed, the activities proposed try to provide an incentive for vocabulary use, so children are not just memorizing the words. It can be observed the communicative approach since the main purpose of the vocabulary learning seems to be the real communication. Besides, after two units

worked, a game or a reading exercise is provided. There are some readings that come with an audio record so children read as they listen to the track. Finally, at the end of the book, there are two more topics related to Christmas and World Environmental Day. During these two mini-lessons children learn and sing a song which has some specific words related to the topic (ex. Gold candle, stars, bells, presents, lights...) and they also create something related to the topic (a Christmas wheel or a shaker with recycled materials) and have a little conversation game in which they use the main concepts.

Observing the activity book we find some more vocabulary activities. During these which they: classify words according to some categories (ex. Kind of sport: ball sports, other sports), complete gapped sentences, label pictures with the correct word, link pictures to a written form ...and, furthermore, at the end of each unit, they find a key language chart where some structures and words are remembered, and a word bank organized in a semantic map in which the words studied are hyponyms of the general word category (ex. Clothes: trainers, boots, gloves, jeans, t-shirt...) and they can also evaluate their own learning process.

b) McLean, A. C. (1997). *Get Set Go! 6*. Oxford University Press

The pupil's book starts with a little revision of the previous knowledge and after two units, there is one devoted to revision of the previous ones. It consists of several texts and activities which include the content learnt in the previous units. We can not find specific vocabulary activities, but it can be observed that it is worked thanks to the amount of texts provided. As there are so much texts to be read, children may learn vocabulary through context cues and it would be a great chance to explore semantic features, word meanings, figurative language or synonyms and antonyms. However, the thing that is suggested is to answer some comprehension questions and complete some sentences which have gaps. We should say that it seems to work the grammatical structures more than the vocabulary, but we can assume that the vocabulary is included in texts and its teaching and learning depends on the way the teacher would like to work on it. Remarkably, some comprehension questions are quite focused on words because children need to have understood the text in order to

answer the related questions about specific aspects of the reading (such as the job of one of the characters) and they use specific words that should be understood and learnt. Nevertheless, this book is working just on the written form of words and on just one meaning of each one.

The workbook offers some vocabulary activities, but most of the exercises are devoted to grammatical patterns. In that book, children can find activities in which they have to label pictures with the correct word or activities in which they are required to use some words to create sentences. Some of the exercises are crosswords or wordsearches and few of them are activities in which children have to classify words according to given categories. From time to time, some communicative activities are proposed. Firstly, children must write some sentences and, then, they are expected to have a conversation with a partner and write down what she or he says. Besides, we can find activities in which children should rewrite the sentences using an appropriate word. However, this activity book lacks in texts and activities are rather repetitive and they can be done automatically. It seems that this lack of texts is due to the presence of texts in the pupil's book, so children have to refer to it when completing some activities. One type of exercise quite repeated throughout the whole book is that one whose main purpose is to develop some associations and sight vocabulary: odd one out.

c) Bowler, B., &Parminster, S. (2003). *Happy Earth 2: American English*. Oxford University Press.

In this English book for ESL, we observe that units are organized in packs of two, followed by some revision pages. All the units have plenty of texts and pictures. Although the first unit of each pack is completed with texts from which vocabulary has to be learnt and extracted, in the second one there are some activities and sections devoted to vocabulary study. In these activities or sections words are accompanied by pictures that represent their meaning. Besides, in at least one of the two units of the pack, there is a "word saver" which is a little chart where some of the main key words are remembered. At the end of each unit there are, firstly, a little project or artistic task in which pupils have to put into practice the knowledge they have acquired during

the unit; and, secondly, there is a comic in which their characters visit one country each time and they get to know some cultural aspects of each one. This project or art work suggested at the end of the units is worth mentioning because, as well as being working with the knowledge they have acquired, we can find some instructions such as: label the photos, use a dictionary to label the pictures, invent a new food product and give it a name, make a list of things you can put in the box to explain life on Earth... all of them related to vocabulary treatment. Moreover, this kind of projects looks for a real communicative situation because children have to present them and listen to other classmates talking about theirs, having the opportunity to make questions and discuss about what they have created.

If we have a look at the index of the activity book we immediately observe that there are lots of activities and sections devoted to vocabulary learning. Once we start examining the whole book we can state that it is true. There are at least five pages devoted to the study and practice of grammar and vocabulary. The kind of activities we find in them are “label the pictures” activities, “complete sentences with key words” activities, crosswords, “correct the word/sentence using the appropriate word” activities, “wordsearch” activities..., and, surprisingly, some of them are phonetic activities, so pupils not only learn the written form and the meaning of the words, but also they are learning their spoken form. The activities whose main purpose is to work on vocabulary acquisitions are designed like games or puzzles, so children are learning words in a motivating, relaxing and non-memorizing way. Besides, there is a section in each unit where children have to produce a text using the grammar and the vocabulary they have been practicing. Of course, as in the pupil’s book, there are some texts to be read and understood.

d) Abbs, B., Worrall, A. and Ward, A. (2000). *Popcorn 6*. Longman

The pupil’s book in this pack provides a complete work on language where vocabulary is also studied. The pages of this book are full of readings so children can develop many strategies to learn vocabulary: use context cues, semantic features... Besides,

each unit has either a song or a listening-reading activity where main vocabulary is used in context and children can learn the spoken form of words. After three units there is a language review in which the main grammatical structures are revised. Furthermore, in this language review, there is a section devoted to communicative skills and children are required to speak, listen or read. What is quite surprising is that there are not writing exercises. Children are hardly writing anything, and if so, they just have to write simple questions or sentences. Probably, they can learn some word-knowledge, but it is not clear that they are developing productive knowledge (at least regarding the writing skill).

On the other hand, the activity book provides pupils with many writing opportunities in which they have to use the vocabulary they have learnt. In addition, when working on words, they are given some concepts and they have to write or complete sentences with them. Besides, some quizzes or questionnaires are proposed and they are related to students' interests and motivations. This kind of activities takes advantage of learners' experiences and background to help them acquire knowledge. As a contrast to the pupil's book, the activity book suffers from a lack of reading, but it is full of oral comprehension activities. Nonetheless, we can not find many specific vocabulary activities, so apparently, vocabulary is not being learnt in a explicit way. It is true that children are supposed to use words they find out throughout the whole book, but there is not a deep learning process. One thing which is quite interesting and enriching is that some sections are devoted to the differences between British and American English. Children listen to words which are differently pronounced and they can develop geographical varieties according to the place or country where the language is spoken.

2.3.2. Suggestions for improving vocabulary teaching

The book that has been chosen to be improved is *Happy Earth 2: American English*, not because it is considered poor, but because it offers many texts where rich vocabulary can be found. As we have said in previous sections, one of the best ways of teaching vocabulary is through real texts or contexts and, once words are found incidentally in them, explicit learning required to acquire words. Thanks to this process (first the

incidental learning and then the explicit one) we can help students to pass from receptive knowledge to productive knowledge.

We have chosen a text about the Titanic, it is on page 44 and belongs to Unit 5 “At sea” (see appendix 1)

As said before, some words have been selected to be studied and learnt. First of all, a *word-wall* is proposed with the main words which are necessary to understand the reading and to carry out the subsequent tasks. Children will see the word-wall posted on the wall, so they will identify some of the words when reading the text. Some of this vocabulary may ring a bell to them, but paying attention to these words they can focus on them when they appear during the reading.

A Arrive at	B Be on the way	C Cabin Corridor Crowd Crew	D Deck	E
F Fall onto	G	H Huge Hoot	I	J
K	L Loud Lifeboats	M	N	O On board
P Passengers Pull into	Q	R Row	S Sailor Ship Shout Sink Suddenly	T
U	V	W Wake/Wake up	X	Y
Z				

Figure 3. Word-wall

First of all, the teacher will read aloud all the words so children can notice how they sound. Then, she or he will ask students to speculate about the meaning of some of them. Children will give some *approximate definitions* and, if they are wrong, the teacher will *dramatize* them in order to give some clues (it is easier to dramatize verbs than nouns or adjectives, so it is recommended to focus, at this first stage, on verbs: to arrive at, to be on the way, to fall onto, to hoot, to pull into, to row, to sink, to shout, to wake up).

Afterwards, the whole group will read the text and pupils will be asked to *retell the story* trying to transmit the whole meaning and focusing on words that appear in the text and that are written on the word-wall.

Once this has been done, students will be asked to find the meaning of sailor, deck, lifeboat, passengers, ship, crew, cabin and corridor by drawing their attention to *context*.

For instance, if they are trying to guess the meaning of sailor they should pay attention to sentences such as: “While they were waiting, a sailor shouted: Women and children first!” or “When sailors were rowing away from the ship...” They should wonder: which class of word seems to be sailor? who can row in a ship? Who can give orders in a ship when there are emergencies? Which could be the sailor’s function?

But, for example, to come up with the meaning of lifeboat they could split the words into two different ones: life and boat, so they would be guessing the meaning thanks to the *morphological analysis of the word*.

On the other hand, cabin, deck and corridor belong to a larger category and we can appreciate some sense relations. By doing a *semantic map* children can classify these words related to the main word: ship. They will be putting into practice: *metonymy*.

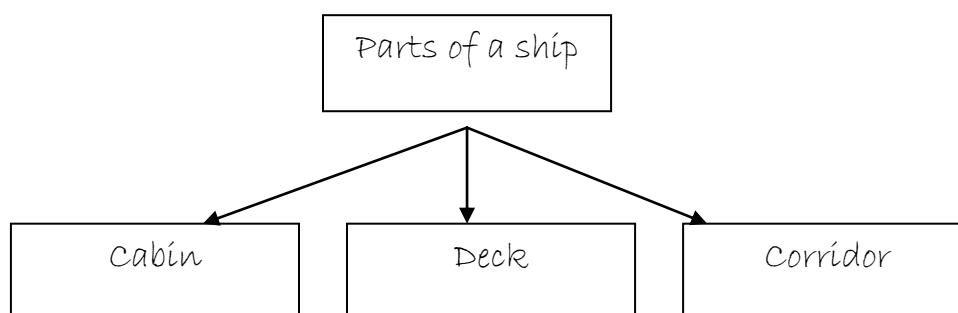


Figure 4. Semantic map: metonymy

Hyponymy can be presented in a semantic web like the following:

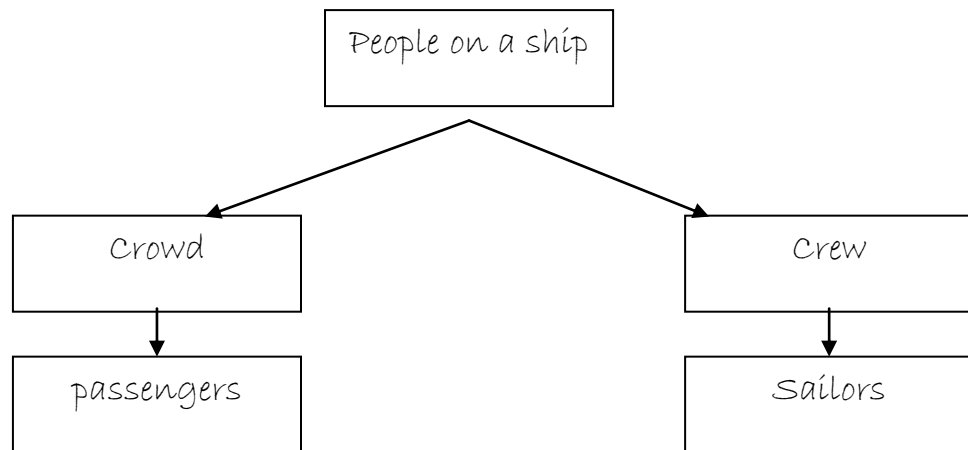


Figure 5. Semantic web: hyponymy

And these two semantic maps can be integrated in a complete semantic map which relates all of the words:

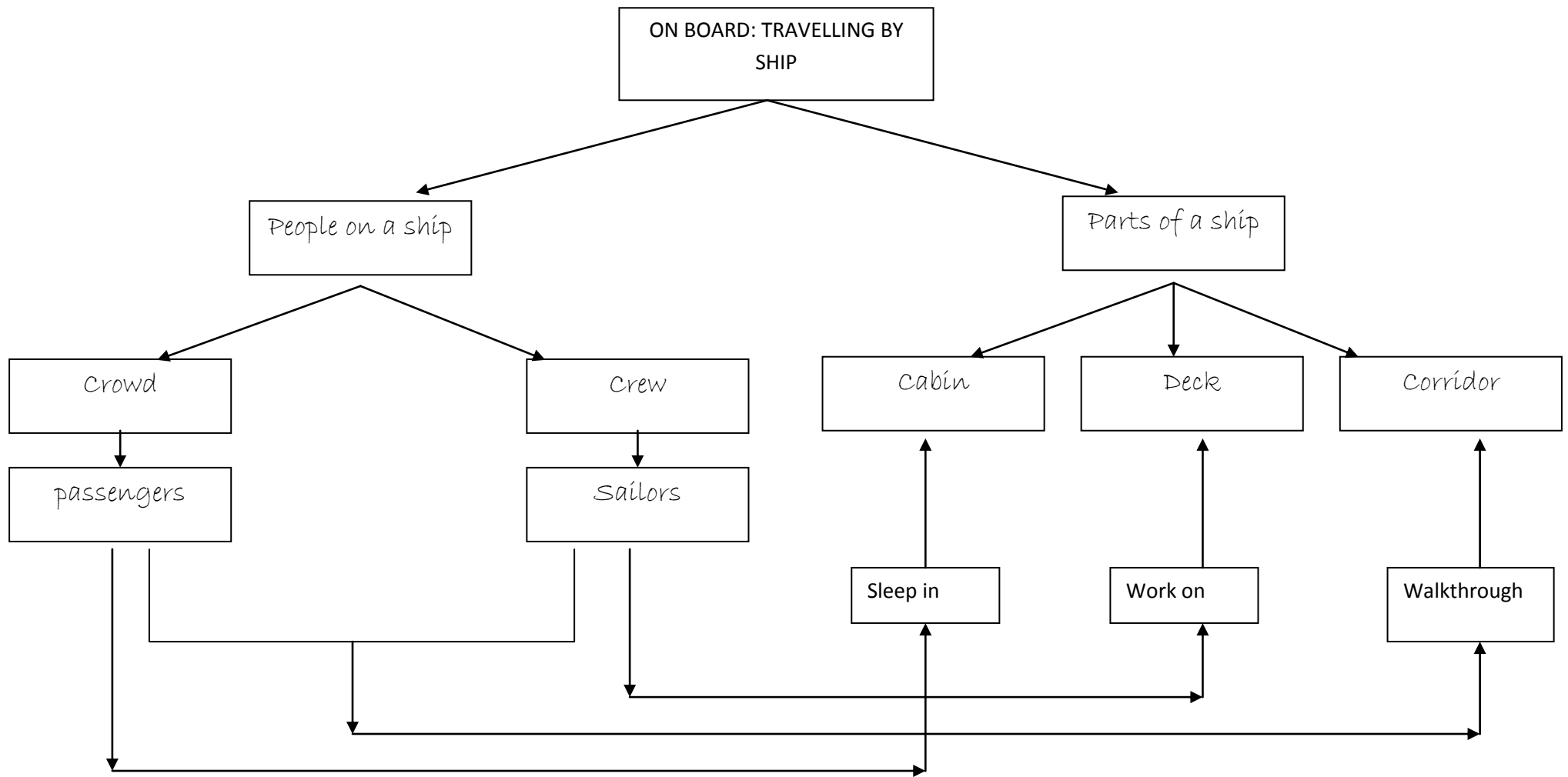


Figure 6. Semantic map: associations

A way to work on the meaning of *huge* can be through *antonyms and synonyms*. First of all pupils can give some antonyms they believe are connected to huge: big, enormous, giant. And they may be required to grade them. As well, they can give some antonyms: small, little, tiny. If the teacher wants, he or she can make them realize that a synonym for *huge* is titanic, so, children can guess why this ship was called that way.

Once the meaning of the word on board has been explained or elicited the *formation of words* (compound words) with *board* can be suggested: blackboard, whiteboard, keyboard, board game, diving board, drawing board, ironing board, wave board, surf board, snow board, chopping board...so they can notice the pattern: board is a surface which can be take several functions.

In order to improve the learning of some words, children should be required to create some pages on their *vocabulary notebooks* devoted to, at least, three words. Here we will show one example:

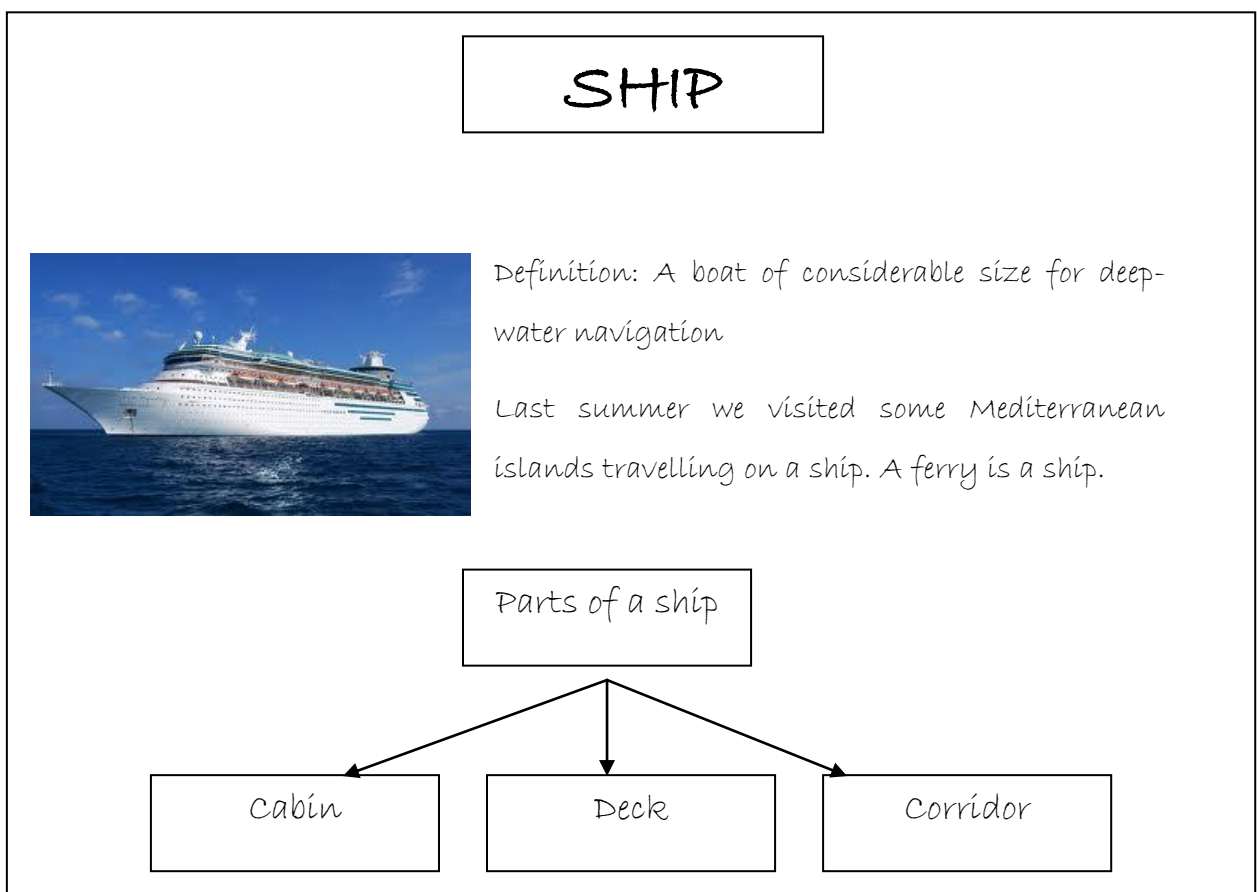


Figure 7. Example of a vocabulary notebook page

There is a *dictionary* on the Internet that could be very useful when learning new vocabulary. This resource provides not only definitions but also lots of word meaning, the spoken form of words (both in British English and American English), figurative meanings... and a lot of information about word-knowledge. The teacher can use it to help student to improve their vocabulary learning as well as their search for information skills (learning-to-learn). Besides, it has to be said, that the use of the Internet prepares pupils to live in our technological society.

<http://www.macmillandictionary.com/>

Finally, with the aim of putting into practice what children have learnt and also of turning passive vocabulary into active (from receptive knowledge to productive one) children should develop a final follow-up task. In pairs, they will imagine they are correspondents in New York and they have had to move to the place where the accident has occurred in order to inform about what happened and about the present situation. They will write a report using those words which have been studied and, after it, they will act in front of their classmates as if they were journalists.

3. RESULTADOS Y DISCUSIÓN

Una vez hecho un estudio detallado que ha abarcado desde lo más general (teorías del aprendizaje y el rol del idioma dentro de las mismas) hasta lo más específico (formas de enseñar y aprender vocabulario en una segunda lengua), podemos decir que tenemos conocimientos suficientes para poder valorar tanto las propuestas del trabajo del vocabulario que desde las distintas editoriales se sugieren, como la propuesta didáctica que, en la anterior sección de este trabajo se ha presentado. Además, los resultados de las encuestas planteadas tanto a docentes como a antiguos alumnos de primaria nos facilitan la evaluación del proceso que hemos seguido.

Por un lado, observamos que los libros de texto de sexto de primaria proponen actividades en las que el vocabulario no está totalmente descontextualizado. Aunque bien es verdad que los numerosos ejercicios proporcionados en todos los packs de libros trabajan el vocabulario de forma muy sencilla (etiquetar imágenes, unir palabras con dibujos, buscar las principales palabras de la unidad en pequeños crucigramas...), la tendencia de todos ellos es la de enmarcar el estudio de palabras dentro de actividades que desarrollan alguna de las habilidades comunicativas. Destacan, no obstante, la lectura de textos y la producción oral, mientras que la comprensión oral está algo menos trabajada y por ejercicios a veces poco significativos (señala con el dedo mientras escuchas). Asimismo, la producción de textos escritos es bastante escasa y, cuando se habla de redactar, normalmente suelen ser frases y oraciones algo simples y sencillas que no están relacionadas entre ellas en una misma producción. Así, aunque se esté siguiendo un enfoque en el que se intenta que el vocabulario pasivo pase a ser activo, el proceso de aprendizaje de palabras resulta muy monótono y repetitivo. Podemos entender, por ejemplo, que por medio de las actividades conversacionales los niños y niñas están poniendo en práctica el vocabulario estudiado, pero no son las tareas comunicativas lo que prima en este tipo de libros de texto.

Por otra parte, del conocimiento global de la palabra solo se está estudiando su forma escrita y, a veces, su forma hablada, pero todos los demás aspectos a tener en cuenta cuando se estudian palabras, están siendo relegados a un segundo plano. Apenas

encontramos diferentes registros de palabras, diferentes asociaciones entre palabras, aunque se puede suponer que, en lo que a la frecuencia de las palabras se refiere, las palabras que se enseñan y se estudian a lo largo de las unidades son palabras que son bastante frecuentes y que los niños y niñas no solo podrán encontrar en textos y conversaciones, sino que, al usarlas en sus producciones (tanto escritas como orales) podrán ser comprendidos fácilmente.

Sin embargo, en cuanto a las estrategias, métodos y actividades que facilitan el aprendizaje de palabras podemos decir que, aunque la importancia de la lectura y comprensión de textos tiene bastante relevancia en los libros de texto, no encontramos apenas ninguna de ellas. Se echa en falta, así, la creación de categorías para clasificar palabras, el uso del diccionario o del tesoro, el uso del análisis estructural de las palabras... No obstante, aunque el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje seguido por las editoriales no reside en la traducción de palabras o en las listas de vocabulario bilingües, se aprecia una falta de profundidad cuando se estudia el aprendizaje. Al final, este proceso reside más en la repetición y memorización que en la construcción de estructuras cognitivas que ayuden a asimilar las nuevas palabras.

No es cuestión de tachar estos libros como inservibles o vacíos de contenido y valor lingüístico, porque, aunque de maneras bastante tradicionales, el vocabulario se refuerza y transmite; pero sí que es cierto y podríamos afirmar que, independientemente de las actividades que se proponen, éstas deberían añadirse y ampliarse fuera de las páginas de los libros. Actividades de refuerzo y con mayor carga cognitiva ayudarán a los alumnos y alumnas a “apropiarse” de las palabras de manera más razonada y comprendiéndolas en una mayor variedad de aspectos.

Se aprecia, a su vez, una correlación entre lo propuesto desde los libros de texto y la metodología seguida por los docentes de primaria. En las encuestas, sus respuestas se caracterizan por la ausencia de estrategias que propicien una adquisición significativa del nuevo léxico, lo que nos puede hacer pensar que, muchas veces, el desempeño docente viene bastante delimitado por las propuestas de las editoriales. Aunque los docentes insisten en que tratan de que la motivación de sus alumnos y alumnas siga en pie, sus metodologías podrían considerarse algo repetitivas y memorísticas, pareciéndose, así, a las de los libros de texto. Además, teniendo en cuenta lo aportado

por los antiguos alumnos y alumnas de primaria encuestados, no podemos obviar el hecho de que resaltarán tanto el rol de la memorización en su proceso de aprendizaje. Es, entonces, necesario, plantearse una alternativa a este hecho, una alternativa que facilite el aprendizaje y mejore la adquisición del léxico de la lengua extranjera.

Por otra parte, valorando la propuesta didáctica elaborada para la aplicación de los contenidos de este trabajo, podemos decir que, al no contar con el tiempo suficiente para llevarla a la práctica, hace que, en realidad, no podamos ser conscientes de si funcionaría o no dentro del aula. Aún así, observándola detenidamente, vemos que se basa principalmente en habilidades comunicativas para la ejecución de una tarea final: comunicar una noticia. Para ello, parte de un texto basado en un hecho real y adaptado al nivel de los niños y niñas para los que está diseñada. Como puede observarse, se han tratado de aplicar muchas de las estrategias y métodos explicados con anterioridad: cuaderno de vocabulario, póster de palabras, análisis estructural de palabras, uso de relaciones de significado (antonimia, sinonimia, hiponimia, metonimia), uso de mapas semánticos... Además, está basada en un enfoque constructivista por el cual los niños y niñas van desarrollando el aprendizaje de palabras gracias a las actividades que amplían sus procesos cognitivos y se entienden como significativas. De todas formas, al ser una propuesta basada en un texto proporcionado por uno de los libros, ésta tampoco llega a abarcar todos los aspectos que el conocimiento de las palabras requiere.

Por otra parte, es apreciable el paso de conocimiento pasivo a activo al haberse propuesto una tarea comunicativa final en la que los alumnos y alumnas tienen que poner en práctica aquellas palabras estudiadas a lo largo del tratamiento del texto.

De todas formas, cabe decir que, si este procedimiento a la hora de enseñar y aprender el vocabulario, que se presenta como algo extenso y demasiado pormenorizado, tuviese que ser llevado a cabo con cada uno de los textos que encontramos en los libros, el tiempo que se necesitaría sería mucho más del que se dispone en realidad en las aulas de inglés de Educación Primaria. De esta manera, podemos apreciar que es cierto lo que se ha dicho en secciones anteriores en cuanto al aprendizaje explícito de palabras (en la sección 6 sobre el proceso de enseñanza-

aprendizaje del vocabulario): consume mucho tiempo y requiere una gran inversión de esfuerzo y preparación.

Así pues, aunque esta propuesta pueda estar bien fundamentada y razonada, se entiende que resulta algo difícil de llevar a la práctica puesto que la inversión de tiempo que se tiene que hacer es mayor que el tiempo que realmente se dispone. Por ello, se deberá llevar a cabo una selección de actividades concretas dentro del amplio abanico propuesto, seleccionando aquellas que se consideren más apropiadas para una tarea en concreto, según su naturaleza.

CONCLUSIONES

Tras este trabajo de fin de grado enfocado al estudio y comprensión del proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje de vocabulario podemos extraer, como conclusión general, que este proceso es algo mucho más complejo de lo que se ha tendido a creer.

El vocabulario tiene más valor en el lenguaje del que se le ha asignado y ha sido relegado a un segundo plano por centrar la enseñanza de las lenguas en la gramática y las normas gramaticales.

Debido a las nuevas propuestas metodológicas sugeridas desde los departamentos de educación y desde Europa (MCERL), se observa que el vocabulario toma un papel fundamental a la hora de adquirir las diferentes competencias lingüísticas y que será éste el que ayude a los niños y niñas a comunicarse en diferentes contextos.

No obstante, para su enseñanza y aprendizaje no podemos seguir anclados en teorías y metodologías que lo relegan a aprendizajes de conductas y memorización descontextualizada o poco significativa. Bajo un marco constructivista en el que se entiende el lenguaje como un proceso de construcción social y en el que el vocabulario es parte esencial para la interacción, los niños y niñas irán construyendo su propio conocimiento y asimilando las nuevas palabras en sus esquemas mentales, favoreciendo las asociaciones entre ellas y apropiándose, cada vez en mayor y mejor medida, de los diferentes aspectos que componen el conocimiento total de la palabra (forma escrita, forma, oral, registro...).

Este proceso constructivo de adquisición de las palabras de una segunda lengua (en este caso del Inglés) tiene que estar apoyado por numerosas estrategias, métodos y actividades que ayuden a los niños y niñas a comprender todos los aspectos de las palabras y a desarrollar y adquirir los diferentes significados de las mismas. Para ello, el uso de materiales visuales, la dramatización, el análisis semántico y estructural de las palabras, la elaboración de mapas semánticos que requieran asociaciones entre palabras, la elaboración de cuadernos personales en los que los niños y niñas plasmen diferentes palabras que están aprendiendo, la utilización del contexto para extraer significados, escuchar historias y recontarlas, etc., ... son estrategias y métodos que

ayudarán al alumnado a la consecución de los objetivos propuestos a lo largo del proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje.

No podemos olvidar que el léxico forma parte de uno de los sistemas del lenguaje que está relacionado con la gramática o la sintaxis. Tampoco que la enseñanza de palabras va mucho más allá de la simple memorización de éstas o la búsqueda de su significado o traducción en diccionarios o listas bilingües de vocabulario. Cuando se esté sumergido en el estudio de palabras de otra lengua se deberán contemplar: los diferentes significados que pueden adquirir, su forma escrita (tanto cuando se encuentran en textos como cuando se tienen que deletrear), su forma oral (cuando se escuchan en conversaciones y cuando se producen para las mismas), su comportamiento gramatical dentro de estructuras más complejas como las oraciones, las palabras que siempre aparecen y van ligadas a ella ("collocations"), su registro, las palabras asociadas semánticamente a ella (ya sean antónimos, sinónimos, hipónimos...) y su frecuencia en diferentes contextos.

Finalmente, cuando se habla del aprendizaje del vocabulario es importante destacar la diferencia tanto del conocimiento receptivo y productivo, como del aprendizaje explícito o incidental. La mera enseñanza del vocabulario y el aprendizaje de palabras (se entiende que incluyendo todos sus aspectos) no asegura la habilidad para ponerlo en práctica, por eso, una vez realizado un aprendizaje básicamente receptivo será necesaria la ejecución de tareas comunicativas para aplicarlo mediante la producción de textos reales (conocimiento productivo). Del mismo modo, será gracias a esta puesta en práctica de las palabras que los niños y niñas conviertan su vocabulario pasivo en activo y las palabras pase de la memoria a corto plazo a la memoria a largo plazo. Además, en la enseñanza de segundas lenguas y su léxico, es fundamental combinar el aprendizaje explícito con el incidental, aunque el aprendizaje explícito requiera una inversión mayor de tiempo, puesto que será a través de un estudio más detallado de la palabra que los niños y niñas la adquirirán y harán suya.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix I

ENCUESTA DOCENTE SOBRE LA ENSEÑANZA DEL LÉXICO INGLÉS

(Trabajo de Fin de Grado)

Años de docencia de la Lengua Inglesa:

Edades con las que se ha trabajado:

¿Qué es lo que considera más importante a la hora de enseñar una lengua?

Evalúe la importancia de la enseñanza del vocabulario del 0 al 5 →

Puntúe del 0 al 5 (siendo el 0 nunca y el 5 siempre) las técnicas que utiliza para la enseñanza del vocabulario de la segunda lengua

	0	1	2	3	4	5
Realia (objetos reales)						
Dibujos						
Mímica, gestos						
Uso de antónimos y sinónimos						
Uso de hipónimos						
Listados de palabras con su traducción						
Definiciones						
Mapas conceptuales						
Clasificaciones						
Extraer significado por el contexto						
Análisis semántico						
Uso del diccionario						
Spelling						

A continuación, marque los elementos del léxico que trabaja en sus lecciones

	Sí	No
Significado		
Relación con otras palabras		
Usos de la palabra: metáforas, dichos y <i>collocations</i>		
Estilo y registro		
Formación de la palabra (sufijos, prefijos)		
Pronunciación		
<i>Parts of speech</i>		
Gramática de la palabra (contable/incontable, +to/+ing)		
Ortografía		

Explique brevemente cómo suele impartir el vocabulario, en qué aspectos suele detenerse más y cómo evalúa su adquisición y uso.

Muchas gracias por su colaboración.

Appendix II

ENCUESTA A ESTUDIANTES SOBRE EL APRENDIZAJE DEL LÉXICO INGLÉS

(Trabajo de Fin de Grado)

Años de aprendizaje de la Lengua Inglesa, indica en que etapa escolar comenzaste (E.I, E.P...)

¿Qué es lo que consideras más importante a la hora de aprender una lengua?

Evalúa la importancia de la enseñanza del vocabulario del 0 al 5 →

Explica brevemente cómo (listas de palabras para memorizar, diagramas, comparación de palabras, mímica, dibujos, traducción de palabras...) aprendiste vocabulario durante los años de Educación Primaria.

¿Crees que hubiera sido más significativo estudiar vocabulario de otra manera? ¿De cuál?
(Explica brevemente que te habría ayudado a adquirir mejor el vocabulario)

A continuación, marca los elementos del léxico que trabajaste en Educación Primaria

	Sí	No
Significado		
Relación con otras palabras		
Usos de la palabra: metáforas, dichos y <i>collocations</i>		
Estilo y registro		
Formación de la palabra (sufijos, prefijos)		
Pronunciación		
<i>Parts of speech</i>		
Gramática de la palabra (contable/incontable, +to/+ing)		
Ortografía		

Muchas gracias por tu colaboración

Elena Agote Agúndez

Appendix III

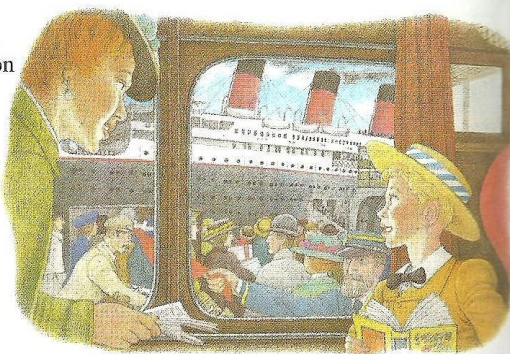
Page 44 Unit 5 "At sea". Bowler, B., & Parminster, S. (2003). *Happy Earth 2: American English*. Oxford University Press.



1 Listen and read.



It was Wednesday 10th April, 1912. Joshua Rose arrived at Southampton with his mother. They were on their way to New York to meet his father. Joshua was reading a book when the train stopped. He looked out. He wanted to be the first to see the world's largest ship, the *Titanic*. Suddenly he saw her. She was enormous!



Joshua and his mother went on board, but they couldn't find their cabin at first. The *Titanic* was like a huge hotel. There were 1,500 passengers and 700 crew on the new ship and everyone was lost! Joshua and his mother found their cabin after an hour. Then Joshua went to explore the ship. He found hundreds of cabins, six restaurants, a library, a hairdresser's, a gym and even a swimming pool. At 12 o'clock they were having lunch when there was a loud noise and the ship started.

It was the fourth night on board. Joshua was sleeping when a loud noise woke him. He could hear people in the corridor.

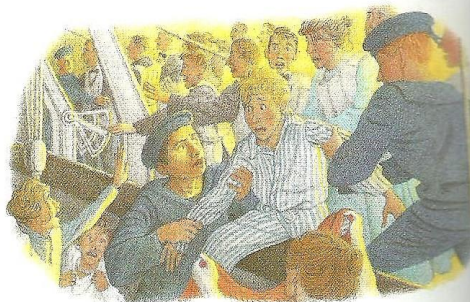
'I saw a huge iceberg.'

'We're lucky that the ship can't sink.'

Suddenly there was another loud noise. The cabin moved and Joshua fell onto the floor. He heard another voice in the corridor.

'It was an iceberg! We're sinking!'

Joshua's mother opened the door. Lots of people were running towards the stairs. Joshua and his mother followed them. There was a huge crowd on deck and everyone was trying to climb into the lifeboats.



Joshua and his mother waited at the back. While they were waiting, a sailor shouted: 'Women and children first!'

They pushed through the crowd and climbed into a lifeboat.

Stage 3

Titanic!

When the sailors were rowing away from the ship, the passengers looked back. The front of the *Titanic* was going underwater and the back was going up in the air. There were lots of people still on board, but there weren't any more lifeboats.

Suddenly there was a terrible noise and the ship broke in two. First the front of the ship sank into the sea, then the back. Lots of people fell into the freezing water. The sailors rowed back and helped more people onto the lifeboat.

Joshua was tired, and he slept a little. It was getting light when he woke up and in the distance he could see a ship. It was the *Carpathia*. The sailors rowed the lifeboat towards the big ship. The crew of the *Carpathia* pulled Joshua into the ship in a large bag. He was freezing and scared, but he was lucky – Joshua and his mother survived.